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MISSIONS AND THE MILLENNIUM.

BY

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MISSIONS AND THE MILLENNIUM.

BY REV. WILLIAM ASHMORE, D. D.

1—There is to be a Millennium.

Nobody who studies the Bible doubts that. It is to be. as its name indicates. a thousand consecutive years in duration before it encounters an interruption. Nobody doubts that either. It is an old Jewish notion that, following Sabbatical anal gies, the children of men were to toil and moil for six days, or for six thousand years from the creation, and then was to come the one day or one thousand years of Sabbath. Call it a Jewish fancy if you choose and let it pass, but remember that in a book written since the Jewish state came to an end, and a book not recognized by them. the one thousand years of Sabbath is declared with absolute positiveness by one who spoke for the Lord Himself.

2—Nature of the Millennium.

It is to be a time when the gospel fruitage of all the ages shall be gathered in. The results of all the effort ever put forth by the servants of God shall then be made to appear. One grand and glorious consummation will then be enjoyed. The kingdom shall then immediately fill the whole earth. God's people will enter into Sabbath. The Saints of the Most High shall possess the kingdom. All the nations and kindreds of the earth shall constitute one great brotherhood. Amity and love and mutual regard shall prevail among them. Wars will cease. They will beat their spears into pruning-hooks and their swords into plowshares. All the false religions of the earth will have passed away. All the blinding and hurtful delusions will have disappeared ; the idols shall be utterly abolished—they shall be

cast to the moles and to the bats. Everything that exalteth itself against God or against His truth or against the well-fare of mankind shall be effectually brought low. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all God's holy mountain. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The sucking child shall play on the whole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. All nations shall serve him. The Kingdom will be set up full and complete ; the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It will be a time of the restitution—a time when the mystery of the world's history shall be explained and God's plan of redemption shall be vindicated in the eyes of all nations.

3—How is the Millennium to be brought about?

A notion prevails that it is to be done very largely, if not mainly, by *human effort.* It is true that effort is said to be put forth through the church, but even though through the church it be, it is *human effort* still, and a very uncertain, unreliable effort it has been, and a very uncertain, unreliable effort it is most certain to be so far as any indications to the contrary are discernible to-day. Along with this is still another notion that the coming of the millennium is to be *very gradual,* gaining little by little as the church wakes up and works along bit by bit between naps and backslidings and lethargies and variations and departures and reformations, followed by other departures indefinitely, so far as mortal man can see anything to the contrary. If these two notions are correct the outlook is disheartening to the last degree. Some people claim that one person in five in this land is a church member. But who will say that one in five is a Christian, or even one in ten ? It is no millennium when Satan has nine and Christ only one. And how

about the rest of the world ? When will Europe, Asia and Africa be as far along as the United States ? And when they do get along are they, too, to be only one out of ten of them real Christians ? Look at our rate of progression, so slow, so uncertain, subject to so many vicissitudes. How many times "fourteen generations" will pass away and yet "the end" not be reached.

Against these two notions we place another conception, that the millennium is to be brought in by *divine* power, and that when the set time comes its incoming will be *rapid*, accompanied with marvellous displays of divine providence and great brightness of divine glory. It was divine power that instituted the original rest. It was divine power that opened Canaan. The people *entered* into rest, they never made the rest. Can it be different with this great Sabbath ahead ? Can it be that God must make the lesser, but that man or the Church can make the greater ? This point is of vital importance. Who is to bring in the millennium—the Sabbatism of all the ages, the Sabbatism of all the nations, the Sabbatism of all the generations, the Sabbatism of the whole earth ? Is it God or is it man ? Is it the disciple or is it his Lord ? Is it the zeal of man or the zeal of the Lord of Hosts that will do this ? But one answer can be given to these questions. An Almighty arm alone can exercise the mighty providences which are to usher in the consummation. He alone can chain the wicked one ; He alone can pour out the fulness of the Spirit ; He alone can overturn and overthrow ; He alone can dash in pieces ; He alone can reconstruct ; He alone has the government upon His shoulders. But has the Church of Jesus Christ no part whatever in all this ? Yes.

4—But We Must First Preach the Gospel in all the World.

This part of the work belongs to the Church ; all the rest belongs to God. Until we have fully made known the gospel to the unevangelized nations there can be no millennium. We

may spend millions in building up some one portion of the earth, this country for example, or Scotland or England, or all three combined, and then millions more on the top of that ; we may plant new churches by the thousand and the ten thousand, and found seminaries by the score and colleges by the hundreds, and endow them all with vast revenues. and fill every village with gospel preaching till it is full and running over, and yet so long as these unevangelized nations are neglected as they now persistently are by us, there can be no millennium. The United States cannot get their millennium before the other nations of the earth get theirs. It will come to all at the same time, and by the same series of providential interventions. Christ himself is the authority for the statement. And this gospel must *first* be published among all nations. Until it is so published there is no hope of a millennium anywhere.

On the same authority of the Lord Jesus we make another statement, that when the gospel *is* so published and preached in all the world for a witness "*then shall the end come*," that is, *then, thereupon, as an immediate sequence, then shall.*" As to days and hours we can tell nothing, but we know that when certain things have been done then certain other things shall follow without fail and without delay.

This is matter of such transcendent moment that we beg to state it afresh. Let the reader examine for himself, and if we are wrong in our logic make instant correction. The Saviour teaches explicitly two things ; (1) *That the consummation called "the end" cannot come until the gospel has been first published among all nations ;* (2) *that when the gospel is so published, then and thereupon the consummation, what ever it is, shall come without delay.*

Beyond question the church's future, the world's future, our very nation's future are wrapped up in the accomplishment of that witnessing among all nations. More momentous passages cannot be found than these in which the Saviour sets forth these things of the last days. Yet no passages more constantly get

the go-by. There have been absurd interpretations given, and the moment one refers to this time-table of the world's progress, the blunders and extravagances of those mal-interpreters are visited upon *his* head. He is charged with teaching that the whole world is to be at once smashed up; that the whole dispensation of the Spirit is a failure ; that a hurried run through a land, shouting here and there a word in passing, constitutes the witnessing enjoined by Christ ; and, finally, that God in vengeful spirit is merely taking away excuse so that He can the more readily smite all humankind with a besom of destruction. Such narrow views are associated with " Millerism," so-called. They are too ridiculous to receive consideration. But why should we refuse to ponder our Lord's words because other men have put upon them absurd constructions ? Ought we not at least to try to find out what He did mean, and all the more as we see the time approaching so much nearer than when the words were spoken ?

Our own small contribution to a correct application we venture to submit for consideration.

" *The end ;*" " then shall the end come." The essential enquiry is to ascertain what is meant by " the end" in this connection. It is not the end of all things, it is not the destruction of the world by fire—that is to come at a much later date and after the millennium is over and a new and more awful apostasy has spread over the earth and taken possession of men more numerous than the sands of the sea in multitude. It seems to us that the verse itself contains the key to its own mystery. " This gospel of the kingdom,"—the complete establishment of the kingdom is the end in view. A kingdom is the outcome of the work of the world's regeneration. God promised to set up a kingdom. John preached a kingdom ; Christ preached a kingdom ; the twelve preached a kingdom ; the seventy preached a kingdom ; Philip among the Samaritans preached a kingdom, and Paul in the far-off heathen capital preached a kingdom. This kingdom was to rule over all other kingdoms.

It was to shape laws and statutes for them according to principles of justice and eternal rectitude. This kingdom was begun to be set up when Christ came, but it was only begun ; it is progressing now, but it is progressing slowly, and it is progressing under conditions which must be complied with before the end is attained, or, in other words, before the long looked-for and long-predicted consummation of the complete setting-up of the kingdom shall take place.

"*For a witness unto all nations.*" Not the bare and barren racing over the earth, preaching a sermon and running on, leaving people bewildered as to what you are talking about. A few foreign missionaries in China to-day are making that mistake, and a sad mistake it is. Very different is the New Testament illustration of the New Testament teaching. Paul was made "a minister and a witness." He planted witnessing churches, rigorous, faithful bodies of witnesses, who should continually be God's witnesses in the cities and communities where they were, and who should be the interpreters of God's providences as they occurred, both providences of judgment and providences of goodness. And thus he showed that being a witness unto Christ was a mighty and a continuous thing on the part of man in the divine movement of the ages.

In like manner in missions to-day we are to be witnesses unto Christ, and we are to be witnesses unto the nations. We are messengers of wondrous mercy, and messengers, also, of contingent judgment in case of refusal to hear. We are to be witnesses against and witnesses for. The work is accomplished according to the New Testament model when we go everywhere among the unevangelized nations and plant among them capable witnessing churches and a competent witnessing ministry, able to propagate their own spiritual kind, continuously witnessing and continuously interpreting the truth of God as revealed in the Gospel.

"*And then shall the end come.*" When all the nations are duly prepared for what is to come, and when every where among

them all are His accredited witnesses and interpreters,—in the form of organized churches,—qualified and waiting to explain to the vast unregenerate multitudes around them the wonderful movements that are to take place, then will the judgments of the nations begin to be meted out, judgments which are to precede and prepare the way for the mighty downpour of the Holy Spirit upon "all flesh," and the great and final mercy which is to come upon all men, Israelite and Gentile alike, as though the very windows of heaven were opened. This great and unusual witnessing among all nations is an essential prerequisite for the fulness and freedom of the divine movement. Whether God deals forth a judgment or pours out a blessing He would have all men concerned fully apprised in advance, so that all men can apprehend, can understand and give Him glory.

A typical foreshadowing of all this took place on a small scale while Christ was upon earth. He appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before His face into every city and place whither He himself would come. The blessing was to follow the messengers in due time. He now sends His missionaries before His face into every city and place whither he Himself figuratively speaking shall come in showers of blessing. The seventy represented the Gentile nations we may reasonably assume, as "the twelve" did the tribes of Israel. To the latter Jesus said, "Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of man be come." This was not a personal coming, but a coming in providence to make a revolutionary change in the administration of the kingdom of grace. This was done when the Jewish state was subverted and a transfer of privilege was made to the Gentiles, who retain it still. "The thing which has been it is that which shall be," says Solomon Following this analogy we may say that the missionaries can hardly have gone over the cities of the world before there will be a coming of Christ of the same nature as took place at the destruction of Jerusalem ; an interposition by providence and by grace, and by manifesto of divine power, ushering in a new state of things a

hundred times more wonderful than were those which took place in connection with the downfall of Jerusalem, yet all in strictest harmony with the existing dispensation of the Spirit.

5—Group of Events that usher in the Millennium.

The old prophets are full of the coming kingdom or times of the millennium; Isaiah and Ezekiel are conspicuous. In many instances one single feature is mentioned of a time; in other cases several are grouped together. The eleventh, thirty-fifth and sixtieth of Isaiah may be cited for example. Taking them all collectively we may specify the following things that directly have to do with the incoming of the millennium, gathering our informati n from Old and New Testament conjointly:

1. JUDGMENTS ON THE NATIONS. These must be visited on them in their corporate capacity as nations. Responsibility is transmissible; the final generation has to take the consequences due to previous generations. This is what Christ teaches when He says that upon this generation shall come all the righteous blood, etc. The last generation of a nation is the residuary legatee of all the preceding ones. This will be the harvest of the earth when all manner of errors and wrongs and frauds and deceptions and false teachings and misleadings will receive their reward in the nations that yet remain unpunished. This is the time of tribulation which is to precede the great Sabbatic dawn. Judgment will be visited, too, on false systems of religion, such as Romanism and Mohammedanism, as has been intimated already. The effect of all these judgments will be to lead men all over the earth to reflection. "When thy judgments are abroad in the earth the nations will learn righteousness."

2. THE LITERAL BINDING OF SATAN. He shall no longer, until the thousand years are finished, blind the minds of men. Truth and error shall then stand each on its own basis. Then truth, in its own inherent might, shall triumph over everything that is false and hurtful. Everywhere it shall receive full and

candid consideration among men. Men will want to know the truth, and seek the truth, and be willing to be guided by the truth. Truth will be king, and all mankind will be its willing subjects. There will be no tempter to evil ; no one to blind the eyes of men ; no one with supernatural skill and cunning and infernal malignity to stir men up to crime and evil-doing ; no one to organize resistance to the authority of Christ ; no power of the air moving swiftly to and fro on errands of evil ; no one to enter into the hearts of men to arouse evil passions and stimulate to evil purposes. All this mighty and ubiquitous hindrance to the triumph of the gospel will be taken out of the way.

3. The Restoration of Israel to God's favor. In all the promises connected with the millennial future none are more striking than those which refer to the redemption of the chosen people. He that scattered Israel will gather him again. Say what we may, the future of us who are Gentiles in these United States is associated with the deliverance of that people. The casting away of them has prepared the way for the reconciling of the world ; the receiving of them will be as life from the dead to us Gentiles. Let any one read the eleventh of Romans, and see if there be a shadow of doubt about this. Take this for example : " Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness." That teaches that God will bless us Gentiles immeasurably more when he restores His people than He is doing now. And again : After this—that is, after a partial and preliminary gathering in of us Gentiles, and before the great and final gathering shall come—" I will return and build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down, and I will build again the ruin thereof." And see what an amazing purpose of mercy it is intended to subserve : " That the residue of them m ght seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth these things." Is it possible to state in stronger language that all the blessings the Gentile world has ever had will be as nothing com-

pared with what is in store for them when God shall restore his ancient people to their place in the everlasting covenant?

Let us indulge here in a little conjecture. England, Scotland and the United States, with parts of Germany, Norway and Sweeden, constitute the Protestant Christian world of to-day. We are busy in a feeble way evangelizing the heathen. But what of the outlook in the rest of the world? What are we doing to offset the error of the Romish Church and the Mohammedan Church and the Greek Church? Nothing, absolutely nothing. How shall we reach them? We don't know. What is the prospect of the conversion of their adherents? Dark, very dark! When will we hope to see them brought in with our present means and methods? Not for ages and ages and ages—nobody knows how many, and nobody can tell when. If anybody has a reasonable conjecture, or any reliable evidence as to how it is to come about, and when it is to come about, let him speak out, for we want light. And yet, unless they are all moved, and mightly moved, how can the earth have any millennium? In persuance of our conjecture let us contemplate the possible moral effect of the sudden conversion of a whole nation, such as Israel would be when brought back to their own land. What if it be the purpose of God to plant Israel in the centre of this triangle of error, the Greek Church on the north with 80,000,000, the Romish Church with 190,000,000 on the west, and the Mohammedan Church on the east with 170,000,000, and then convert the nation of Israel at once, pouring out over it the spirit of grace and supplication? What a mighty shout of deliverance would go up? What Gentile song ever heard in the whole earth would equal that which would go up from suddenly regenerated Israel. The whole house of Pharaoh could hear the weeping. A nation would be born at once. Such a mighty witness to the veritable truth of God would give the lie to the assumptions of each of these three great false religions at once. Their leaders and their traditions could blind them no longer. A converted nation—a resurrected nation—would operate in all

these masses as the resurrection of Lazarus did upon the Jews. Then, too, would be fulfiled the words, " and he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. Ye are my witnesses, said the Lord God." Israel has never done much witnessing for God, and never done any witnessing at all as yet for their Kinsman, Redeemer, the mighty child of Jacob, but the day will come when they surely will. To whom much is forgiven the same loveth much. Shall Israel alone be found wanting in a testimony for the Messiah of the seed of Abraham like themselves? God's words will not fall to the ground which He hath spoken concerning His ancient people whom he did foreknow. When this time does come the heavens and the earth will hear such witnessing for Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham, as they have never yet heard from us Gentiles in all our life-long history thus far. The converted exiles will teach us how to witness, and how to praise, and how to consecrate ourselves.

4. The Unconditional Outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh. In the economy of the divine administration we are always put under *conditions* first. That arises from the necessity of teaching us our weakness and our dependence on God. When we have failed under conditions, then God bestows the mercy without any conditions. The former is the administration of law, the latter the administrationof grace. We find that true in the experience of us all. We first try to achieve salvation under conditions. When we find we cannot meet the conditions, and give up in despair, then God justifies us freely by His grace, without any conditions. It is so with the Spirit. The gift of the Spirit's power is more or less dependent on conditions at the outset, seemingly. When the Church comes to discern its helplessness, and the world fails to meet the conditions, then repentance and faith will be given without conditions, and the Holy Spirit also will be poured out without any measure save that of the world's need. " And it shall come to

pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh." A great many failures were necessary to prepare the way for that wonderful declaration. When Israel came short God met it by higher promise. When they fell still farther short He met them by a still higher promise. The lower they fell the higher became His declarations. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. When they sinned in the narrow land of Palestine, then He declared the whole earth should be blessed. Grace towered above transgression. So in Joel, Israel had sinned and grieved His Holy Spirit; but the Lord was not to be thwarted. He would get to Himself still greater glory. He would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. The representatives of all flesh out of all nations were there in that crowd on the day of Pentecost. Peter addressed the representatives of all nations, Cretes, Arabians, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and even strangers from Rome, the centre of the heathen world. On that day they saw the first fruits of the outpouring of the Spirit. The great outpouring is still to come, when the times of refreshing shall appear. Then the mighty energizing of the Holy Spirit will make pentecostal ingathering an every-day occurrence all over the world. These will be the days of purely unconditional grace. Grace that is conditional is no grace at all in the highest sense. Now, all things are conditioned by our ability to repent. Then He who has been exalted will as a Prince give repentance, and as a Saviour give remission of sins, justifying everywhere freely by His grace, not a three thousand at a time, but a ten thousand or a twenty thonsand or a hundred thousand. Along the track of the ages, and against the obstacles interspersed by fallen human nature, has this yearning of the divine heart for the unconditional display of His love been steadily working its way. When the end is achieved the millennial brightness will fill the whole earth.

5. And finally the trooping in of the nations. These will not then turn to the Lord by towns and by cities, but by whole nations at a time. The mountain of the house of the

Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills. That is, it shall take the place of prominence in the whole earth. No human institution shall stand above the Church of God ; none shall even come into competition with it. " And people shall flow into it." The drift of all human desire and of all human thought shall be toward the house of the Lord, and whatsoever is associated therewith. And many nations shall say—mark it well—many nations shall say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us of His ways and we will walk in His paths, for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Hitherto we have been taught in our own ways and walked in our own paths. But now we come from the ends of the earth confessing that our fathers have inherited vanity, and lies and things wherein there is no profit. Henceforth we will take our departure anew from the law of the Lord and the house of God. The teachings of His Word shall be the supreme law in all our national councils, and the controlling factor in the development of all our civil and social organizations. We each recognize the other as members of a common family of nations and a common brotherhood of human kind. Into His presence will we bring the honor and glory of the nations, and all our allegiance shall be given to Him who, whether present in actual person or only in spirit, is head over the nations, King of kings and Lord lords.

6—What Foreign Missions has to do with all this.

Something has been said already, but a few words more may be added. Foreign Missions have everything to do with the result. We apply the word " foreign" now to the unevangelized portions of the world. We have missions in Europe. They are " foreign," but they are not to unevangelized people. The prosecution of them cannot be of the same importance to the world's near future that missions to the unevangelized are. Of

course we must press them, and press them with increasing vigor for their own sakes, but whether we press them or not they do not stand in the way of the millennium, according to these teachings of Christ. But the others do stand in the way. They must hear, and be in course of preparation. And so Foreign Missions, so-called, loom up into tremendous importance in comparison with any and all other domestic missions combined. We may push domestic missions a hundred-fold beyond what they are now, but continuing to slight the unevangelized, and putting them off till we get all our fine churches built, and telling them to wait till we are more fully supplied, as we are now in the habit of doing—so long as this is the case, we say, we shall find ourselves just where we were. How differently Christ estimates things from ourselves. We discriminate in favor of cultured people and cultured nations in a manner we never see him do. All must hear. All must have the same opportunity. It was not of his chosen purpose, so far as we can see, nor is it according to the precedents of the Book, that one man should be entitled to a thousand sermons while in other cases a hundred thousand men should never hear one sermon. That inequality is not of God, but of man. It is a startling truth, but it is a truth nevertheless, that in this matter the great and important peoples are to have no advantage over the small and unimportant. All are wrapped up in the same bundle of destiny. The welfare of this great nation is made dependent on their faithfulness to the small nations. No millennium for any of them until all have heard. Postpone the evangelization of the heathen in Asia and Africa, and we postpone the coming of the millennium in the United States. No evangelization for heathendom means no millennium for Christendom.

China, October, 1889.